

# Daily Press Briefing: Discussion on Nigeria

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## Contents

May 15, 2014 .....	2
May 13, 2014 .....	4
May 12, 2014 .....	8
May 9, 2014 .....	11
May 8, 2014 .....	16
May 7, 2014 .....	23
May 6, 2014 .....	29
May 5, 2014 .....	37
May 1, 2014 .....	42
April 14, 2014.....	43
April 7, 2014.....	44
October 15, 2013 .....	45

**May 15, 2014**

**Marie Harf**, Deputy Spokesperson

**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Nigeria, via telephone**

**Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** Marie, do you have any update on the – excuse me – on the search for the Nigerian schoolgirls?

**MS. HARF:** Yeah. Not – I don't have much of an update. As you know, the search is ongoing. We're playing a supporting role; Nigeria is in the lead. In addition to other support we've announced recently – which included, I think, some manned aerial vehicles – we are now flying unarmed UAVs in support of the search effort. And as you also know, this is a very difficult mission.

On the – related to this, as you may know, on Saturday there will be a meeting in Paris that's related to the – it's called the Nigerian Security Conference. It's really designed to bring together a number of countries to encourage and improve regional cooperation in West Africa on counterterrorism and really emphasize the importance of a comprehensive strategy that includes not only military and security, but governance, rule of law, justice, development – all the issues that really go into combating terrorism. Under Secretary of State Wendy Sherman will lead the United States delegation to the conference, which we had not previously announced. So that's something new there in terms of our engagement and helping find a comprehensive strategy to fight this threat.

But again, on the specifics, we're continuing to work. The team's in place and hopefully we can make some progress soon.

**QUESTION:** Is there any new intelligence that the U.S. has been able to share with the Nigerians, between the overflights and the satellite imagery? Anything that you can shed a light on?

**MS. HARF:** No, not really. I mean, obviously, we can't talk about all the ways we collect information on trying to find these girls. But we are continuing to work through arrangements that allow us to share intelligence information with Nigeria. We're working to build a baseline for that; we are working on getting as much information as possible. But again, I think we've all said this is – we're basically searching for these girls in an area that's roughly the size of West Virginia. So it's a tough challenge, to be sure.

**QUESTION:** Is there any confidence that all of the girls are still within Nigerian borders, or is there the working assumption that some of them may have been taken to Chad or to Mali. And related to that, has the U.S. been able to obtain permission from those governments to conduct surveillance flights over those two countries?

**MS. HARF:** That's a good question. I don't know the answer to that. We have said that there are indications that some might have been moved. Obviously, we're looking at all options for

where they may be. But I can check with our folks and see if there's more light to shed on how we're working with other countries.

**QUESTION:** Okay. And I know that it may be in bad form for the U.S. Government to do so, but apparently, some 32, 33 days after these girls were abducted, the Nigerian president is finally in Chibok to visit the school and meet with relatives. Is that even appropriate at this point?

**MS. HARF:** What, that he would be there meeting with the families?

**QUESTION:** Well, after 32, 33 days, doesn't it seem as if, why bother?

**MS. HARF:** Well, I don't think I would ever say, "Why bother," for folks meeting with families of people who are clearly hurting and want to see their girls come home. I do think, what we've said from the beginning, that time is of the essence, and that that's why we've tried to move as quickly as we could to move assets into place to help with this. And I think that the Nigerian Government, who is in the lead here, does realize that as well.

**May 13, 2014**

**Jen Psaki, Spokesperson**

**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Nigeria**

**Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** I wondered if there was any updates you could give us on the search for the school girls. Yesterday there was – a senior Administration official was saying that there are manned assets which are being flown over Nigeria with the government's permission. Could you give us a little bit more update on what those are about – whose planes, who's flying them?

**MS. PSAKI:** U.S. Let me give you a couple of updates on Nigeria. The search is ongoing, as you all know. The Nigerians continue to be in the lead. We're playing a supporting role and bringing our capabilities and expertise to bear in supporting their efforts and complementing their efforts. Our interdisciplinary team – the entire team is in place on the ground at the Embassy to provide military and law enforcement assistance as well as intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance support. We've provided commercial satellite imagery and are flying manned intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance aircraft over Nigeria with the government's permission. We're also working closely with international partners on the ground broadly about the entire effort, including with the United Kingdom and France. In New York, we're continuing to press for additional multilateral action, including UN Security Council sanctions on Boko Haram. As you know, of course, this is a difficult mission, and we're looking for the girls in an area roughly the size of New England. So we continue to work with the team on the ground on that effort.

**QUESTION:** Can you tell us what kind of aircraft you're using?

**MS. PSAKI:** They are manned DOD fixed-wing aircraft.

**QUESTION:** More than one?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't – I believe so. I don't have any details, and I don't think I'll –

**QUESTION:** Can you tell us how many missions you've flown so far?

**MS. PSAKI:** Probably not, but I'll check and see if there's more detail.

**QUESTION:** And do you have a Nigerian team with you on those flights? I mean, is it just purely U.S. military who are flying these, or is there --

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm happy to check and see if we're going to get into any greater level of detail than what I've just laid out.

**QUESTION:** Can I --

**QUESTION:** Has the U.S. intelligence been able to --

**QUESTION:** Will you support the Nigerians if they --

**MS. PSAKI:** Let's just do one at a time. Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** Will you support the Nigerians if they go ahead and negotiate with the Boko Haram?

**MS. PSAKI:** I addressed this yesterday. Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** Did you say where the flights are originating or where the planes are coming from, what country?

**MS. PSAKI:** No, I didn't get into that level of detail. I don't think we're going to. So -- go ahead. More on Nigeria? Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** Yeah. Has the video been authenticated by U.S. intelligence?

**MS. PSAKI:** We're still continuing to look into that as our intelligence experts mentioned yesterday -- or as I mentioned about what they're doing. They're continuing to comb through every detail of the video for clues that might help in the ongoing effort, but I don't have any new updates on that today.

**QUESTION:** The local governor is saying that he was able to show the video to some of the parents and they were able to identify their children. Has that information been provided to whoever's doing this verification for assistance?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, it was publicly broadcast, but I don't have any other additional details in terms of our efforts.

**QUESTION:** Well, in the town where they happen to be living, they don't have internet. And so they had to actually put together a viewing for them so that they could take a look at it.

**MS. PSAKI:** I am aware. We've seen those reports.

**QUESTION:** Right. Yes.

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any other -- what I'm conveying is that what -- the story you're telling right now was publicly broadcast, so I think everybody's aware of it. But I don't have anything new to convey in terms of our specific search or the video.

**QUESTION:** Can I ask you the same question I asked yesterday? How, exactly, would -- what do you mean by "authentication" and "verification" of this video?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well --

**QUESTION:** Are U.S. officials looking at this to be – with the eye – with an eye toward saying, “Yes, these are the girls who” – “are some of the girls who were kidnapped,” or are they looking at it – because I don’t know how the U.S. would have the ability to authenticate or verify this video, unless you had photographs of each – so --

**MS. PSAKI:** What I said yesterday, Matt, was we have no reason to question the authenticity.

**QUESTION:** Right. No, I understand that. Are they looking at it to try and say, “Yes, this is real,” or are they looking at it to try and see if they can locate or see if there are any clues in the video that might indicate where exactly these people are?

**MS. PSAKI:** They’re looking at it for any clues or information that would help in our search.

**QUESTION:** All right. And then, recognizing that the overflights are all a DOD thing – I think, right? It’s a – this is a DOD operation; it’s kind of not – we’re asking the wrong person if we’re asking you for details on these flights, right?

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm, but I’m happy to still follow up on it.

**QUESTION:** But do you know – in terms of the State Department, in terms of what this building’s role or the Embassy’s role is, can you elaborate a little bit on – like, are there people from State who are in these planes that you can – that you can speak to what they’re doing? What – are there people on the ground and up in the north from the Embassy who are doing coordination?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, there are five State Department officials that --

**QUESTION:** But what are they doing? That’s --

**MS. PSAKI:** I’m answering your question.

**QUESTION:** Okay. All right.

**MS. PSAKI:** They are – two strategic communications experts, a civilian security expert, and a regional medical support officer are on the ground as part of the team. Obviously, this entire team is working together, whether they’re from DOD or DOJ or the State Department.

**QUESTION:** Right. I understand that, but --

**MS. PSAKI:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** -- since you speak for the State Department, I’m just wondering if – I mean, what does a strategic communications person do in this instance?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well obviously, Matt, there are a range of steps that need to be taken here, including the Nigerian Government’s efforts to communicate their needs and what’s happening

on the ground, including efforts to address what's coming in from the outside. So we put together a team that covers a range of capacities, and that's – those are the five people from the State Department.

**QUESTION:** Now, it just so happens that the AFRICOM commanding general, General Rodriguez, was in Abuja for a pre-scheduled visit, and he ended up having a meeting, I understand, with Assistant Secretary Sewall as well with the ambassador.

**MS. PSAKI:** He's – Under Secretary Sewall – he's traveling there with her on a prior scheduled trip.

**QUESTION:** Can you – do you have a readout on the meetings that they had with their Nigerian counterparts, given the enormity of this current situation?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't. I can check with their – with Under Secretary Sewall's team and see if there's more. I'd point you to DOD for General Rodriguez's schedule and any readouts.

Scott, in the back. Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** How much of this was part of this morning's conversation with Foreign Minister Fabius, especially as the French have taken more of a leadership role in the Trans-Sahelian terror fight against AQIM?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, they certainly share a concern about the girls and their location and our efforts to fight terrorism in the region. The meeting they had was about 45 minutes, and it covered a broad range of topics, so no topic took an enormous chunk of the meeting.

**QUESTION:** Can I just ask one more on these overflights? I appreciate it's a – should be a DOD question, but since we have you here as captive in front of us --

**MS. PSAKI:** Yes, I'm here. I'm captive.

**QUESTION:** You're captive. Are any of these – are these flights just solely concentrated on the Nigerian territory, or are you also looking into other countries, given that you had said last week that you feared some of the girls might have been moved across the border?

**MS. PSAKI:** They're – as I understand it – I'm happy to check on this with the pool of other questions – but they're flying over Nigeria with the government's permission. So I'm not aware of other areas, but we can double-check that as well.

**QUESTION:** Can you check and see if you've sought permission from the neighboring countries, particularly Chad and Cameroon, where you said that you thought --

**MS. PSAKI:** I will see if that's a detail we would like to share.

**May 12, 2014**

**Jen Psaki**, Spokesperson

**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Nigeria**

**Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** Nigeria. I wondered if you'd seen the new video that's out this morning, in which it purports to show about 130 of the girls who were kidnapped by Boko Haram four weeks ago – whether you'd been able to independently verify it and what you made of the assertions from Abubakar Shekau that the girls would be released in return for the release of Boko Haram members who are being held by the Nigerian Government?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, in the video – we have seen the video. We have no reason to question its authenticity. Our intelligence experts are combing through every detail of the video for clues that might help in ongoing efforts to secure the release of the girls. Obviously, it was just released, so we don't have any specific update on that.

In terms of the question you had about the reports of a trade offer, as you know, Nigeria is in the lead. We are simply supporting their efforts. We, as you know – also, our policy is to deny – the United States policy, I should say, is to deny kidnappers the benefits of their criminal acts, including ransoms or concessions, so I don't have any other particular update on this report.

**QUESTION:** But if the Nigerians decide to go ahead with this swap, you would then support them in this, would you, because --

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not going to speculate on that. It's – you're familiar with our position. Obviously, again, the Nigerian Government has the lead here.

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** Is there a concern --

**QUESTION:** The U.S. has certain assets on the ground in Nigeria now in terms of data collecting or intelligence collecting and so on. The U.S. does have assets, correct? And it is aiding the government?

**MS. PSAKI:** We are providing intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance support. We do have a team on the ground, as I spoke about a little bit on Friday. Of that team, 26 of the 27 members – that includes some who have come in and some who are already on the ground – are on the ground in Nigeria digging in on the search and coordinating closely with the Nigerian Government as well as international partners and allies. So we are, as you've heard the President and the Secretary say, doing everything possible to assist in their effort.

...

**QUESTION:** Can I just – I got two --



**MS. PSAKI:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** -- extremely brief ones on Nigeria. One, how would the United States be in any position to authenticate a video, this video?

**MS. PSAKI:** I said we have no reason to question the authenticity. There's a difference.

**QUESTION:** I know. Do you have any way to authenticate it, short of if you have a photograph of every single one of these girls and then could match them -- do you have a photograph of --

**MS. PSAKI:** It would be challenging to do --

**QUESTION:** All right.

**MS. PSAKI:** -- but regardless, we use every clue possible to see how it can contribute to finding the girls.

**QUESTION:** Right, no. But I mean, you don't know if these girls are, in fact, those -- the ones that are abducted. And I'm wondering if you have any way, if you do have a way to authenticate, if you have photographs of those who have been reported missing, that you could compare with the pictures with the video. Do you?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any other details on how we're looking into the video.

**QUESTION:** Okay. And one that you corrected yourself -- you said we oppose or "our policy is to deny" kidnappers the benefits of their actions, but then you changed that to say "the United States policy" is --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I thought I was saying it in a confusing manner, so that's why I said "the United States."

**QUESTION:** Okay. Do you have concerns that other countries do not necessarily share your feelings about the benefits of paying ransom for people who have been abducted?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't think I have to speak to what the policies of other countries are on this front.

**QUESTION:** Well, you speak to people's policies on lots of other things. Do you have concerns that other countries are actually going around and paying ransoms to Boko Haram or to other terrorist groups?

**MS. PSAKI:** I just don't have anything for you on that, Matt.

**QUESTION:** Would the United States Government consider kidnapping Boko Haram members and doing a prisoner exchange?

**MS. PSAKI:** That's quite a line of conspiracy theory there, Lucas.

**May 9, 2014**

**Jen Psaki**, Spokesperson

**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Nigeria  
Washington, DC**

**MS. PSAKI:** I have one update for all of you at the top. A number of you have been asking for updates on the specifics of the interagency team that will be traveling to Nigeria. Just as a reminder, these individuals are complementing our country team that's already been on the ground, has been in close touch with Nigerian authorities from the beginning, working hard to assess their needs.

So arriving today, there will be seven from AFRICOM and one from State, seven – so that is a total of eight. An additional seven will be arriving tomorrow – three from the FBI, three from the State Department, one from USAID. As we've been outlining all along, these individuals will be complementing our team on the ground. They'll be working with authorities and local populations. They'll be providing technical and investigatory assistance, helping with hostage negotiations, advising on military planning and operations, and assisting with intelligence and information. And obviously, as needs are assessed, if there are needs for more, we'll continue to assess that.

That's what I have at the top. Should we start with the ladies in the front?

**QUESTION:** Yeah. Well, we – can we follow up to start with --

**MS. PSAKI:** Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** -- while you're on that subject?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** Today, President Jonathan said that the girls were still in Nigeria.

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** U.S. intelligence is saying they've probably been split out and moved out of the country. Are you guys discussing this? Have you got any more information as to where those – where they could be?

And then to follow up on what you've just announced, what exactly is the strategy here? Is it the idea to work with the Nigerians, build it up – isn't that time – going to take some time to build up that capacity? The U.S. is considering sending surveillance aircraft and stuff. When is that kind of decision going to be made? Is it only after a strategy is formulated or – I'm just looking at timing of those kinds of decisions.

**MS. PSAKI:** Certainly. Well, let me answer your first question. Our assessment hasn't changed, but obviously, these discussions are ongoing, and our priority and the priority of the Nigerians is getting the girls back to their families. So we are – those discussions are ongoing.

Let me provide you just one more quick update: Yesterday, Ambassador Entwistle met with President Goodluck Jonathan on the margins of the World Economic Forum. They agreed on the importance of quick action on the UN designation of Boko Haram as a terrorist group. President Jonathan also affirmed his continued support for the multidisciplinary team.

And as you've heard the Secretary say and the President and other very senior officials, we want to move as quickly as possible. And let's not forget that this specific offer and acceptance of assistance happened only three days ago. We have – already have individuals on the ground who will be assisting with the needs of the Nigerian Government.

Obviously, time is of the essence, and we're going to do everything we can to move this as quickly as possible. And coordination meetings – internal coordination meetings, meetings with officials in the Nigerian Government are ongoing, and they will be over the course of the next couple of days.

**QUESTION:** And so the Nigerians have asked for surveillance and possibly intelligence sharing, a sensitive issue. How seriously are you considering that?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, obviously, intel sharing will be part of what our team will be working together on. Beyond that, I'm not going to outline further the specifics beyond what we have said our team would be providing.

**QUESTION:** There's been criticism in the last day or so that the U.S. – the Administration dragged its feet on naming Boko Haram a terrorist organization. Would that have changed anything as far as you're concerned in preventing this kind of attack?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, let me first say we designated three Boko Haram leaders, related individuals, back in June of 2012, so under Secretary Clinton. Designating groups or leaders is one key tool in our toolbox, but it's not the only one. And I would point you to President Obama's speech he gave almost exactly a year ago where he talked about the need for a holistic approach to countering terrorism. That's what we're pursuing, what we've been pursuing with the Nigerians and international partners. We've been working to counter Boko Haram for many, many years. And designating is one tool, but certainly, we've been long – we have long been working on this effort before the designation last November.

**QUESTION:** Can I just go back to --

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** -- Lesley's initial question about do you believe that the girls are still in one group or whether they've been split up?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any other details to share in terms of what the discussions are on the ground.

**QUESTION:** And you're in contact with governments in neighboring countries where it's believed some of these girls might have been taken to?

**MS. PSAKI:** We have been. Our – as I mentioned yesterday, I don't have any new updates, but we've been in contact through our embassies on the ground, yes.

**QUESTION:** And do you have any reaction to the news this morning from Amnesty International that, in fact, the Nigerian army was warned about – nearly five hours before the girls were snatched that this was coming and they just didn't have enough teams on the ground – I appreciate it's in northeastern Nigeria, but they just didn't have enough people that they could muster to try and stop the raid happening. Is this a dereliction of the duty of the Nigerian authorities?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, obviously, given how horrific this tragedy is of the kidnapping of these girls, I think it's only natural that people are looking back and seeing what could have been done differently or what preparations could have been made. And as you know, we've been working very closely with the Nigerian Government for months, if not years, on increasing their capacity building and ability to address these threats. But again, I don't have any specific assessment from here from the U.S. Government on past reports.

**QUESTION:** Following on Jo's point, the government is telling us that they had maybe two hours' notice. Is there – and I know that you just touched on this – but how can the U.S. help the Nigerians get their arms around a security situation that has been bedeviling them for years now in terms of what sort of capacity building can be done? Is it just enough to have 50 Marines who have been training with the military? Is that enough? Do you see more proactive approaches in terms of protecting other schools in the northern part of the country?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, Roz, without getting into a too specific level of detail, part of our effort, including with this team but also that's been ongoing, is to, as you mentioned, increase the capacity of the Nigerian Government, including helping Nigeria professionalize its military to counter threats like these, working on Nigerian law – working with them, I should say – Nigerian law enforcement so that they can better investigate and assist in hostage situations, preventing future hostage situations. We're also helping to provide, as you know, economic assistance to help with all of these areas. And our overall effort here is to help stem the threats of extremism from Boko Haram and other groups. And certainly, as we look at this tragedy, working with the Nigerian Government to do everything we can to prevent in the future is part of our effort as well.

**QUESTION:** Jen, sorry, just to go back to – when you mentioned there's three State Department people flying out today and three tomorrow, which departments are they from within State?

**MS. PSAKI:** Let me see if I have any greater level of detail on that specifically, Jo. We have a team leader who's going from our AF Bureau who's going to help assist in that front. We have

some communications and mid-term response support as well going. If there's more detail I can provide, we're happy to send that around to all of you.

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** Is the U.S. going to raise with the Nigerian Government this Amnesty report?

**MS. PSAKI:** We've been in very close contact with them, and there are a range of discussions going on. I'll check and see if there's more level of detail on that.

Do we have more on Nigeria?

**QUESTION:** Yeah.

**MS. PSAKI:** Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** Are you not considering or – and if not, why – like a team – requesting a team of military special ops like the folks hunting Kony?

**MS. PSAKI:** I think the Department of Defense has spoken to this, and I'd point you to their comments. That's not – we're providing a range of assistance on the ground with – as part of our interagency team, but that's not currently what we're discussing.

**QUESTION:** Does the United States believe it will be possible to get all the girls back or some of the girls back? Is there any indication yet that this is going to be possible? It's been – I mean, it's been three weeks and they're going on four now, so --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, certainly, Jo. Obviously, it's challenging, and the Secretary answered a question on this when he did his Twitter town hall this morning. It's challenging. Time is of the essence. It's been, I think, 25 days now since these girls were taken. We're going to do everything possible. But again, given the circumstances, it's tough, and I don't want to make any predictions about the outcome.

**QUESTION:** Well, what about – can I just ask also – there were eight other girls who were taken from a different part of northeastern Nigeria as well. Will your – on the weekend. Will your search extend to them? Are you going to try and bring everybody into this hunt?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm happy to check on that level of specificity. Obviously, any young girls who are taken in circumstances like these our team would be working in the capacity we can offer assistance with the government. So I'll see how expansive this focus is.

**QUESTION:** And I just wonder more broadly, I mean, this is an issue where I think girls, once they reach a certain age, 12 and above, once they're considered to have been in puberty are considered as marriageable in the culture in parts of Nigeria. I wonder more broadly what the United States can do to try and educate Nigerian society and society more broadly that these are still children; they're not of the age of majority yet, and they should be given – girls and boys

should be given the opportunity to reach maturity. And this idea of marriage as a child is actually one that's abhorrent to many countries in the West.

**MS. PSAKI:** Yeah. You are right. And this is another question that the Secretary answered this morning. I think obviously in his view, one of the things we can do is talk about and shine a light on these horrific and abhorrent acts that are happening around the world. And we, as you know, put out a report every year on trafficking. We do everything we can to raise concerns about child trafficking, about child marriage, about many of these issues that we consider human rights abuses. And there really is no, I think, silver lining we can look at when it comes – we can – we should be pointing to when it comes to the tragedy in Nigeria. However, we are all talking about this right now. News networks around the world are talking about this right now. And I think what people need to remember is that this isn't a new – this is not a new unfortunate occurrence. There are children who are married around the world, there are – who are married, I should say, against their will around the world. There is trafficking that's happening around the world, and we need to do everything we can to talk about it. And I think that's something the Secretary will continue to be focused on.

**May 8, 2014**

**Jen Psaki**, Spokesperson

**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Nigeria**

**Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** Secretary Kerry noted this morning that the team, the American team, is hitting the ground today – or now, and he called on the international community to focus their attention on fighting Boko Haram. I wanted to go back to a question that was asked yesterday but sort of maybe add some more depth to it. You were asked whether – why it had taken so long to designate Boko Haram as an FTO. And I don't know if you've seen the story that's out today in an online publication that, in fact, Secretary Clinton, who I know was before your time, but she and the State Department on that point, back in 2011-2012, fought against CIA, Justice Department, other advice, to designate Boko Haram as an FTO, which I believe gives law enforcement agencies certain powers that they can then go in and start helping.

What is your reaction to that? Why did the Secretary – did – was that true that she refused the advice of other agencies within the Administration? And if so, why?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I'm obviously not going to discuss internal debates, especially those that happened years ago. But under Secretary Clinton, I would remind you, we did designate three Boko Haram leaders in 2012. That was an important step, one that the United States was forward on, one that did put in place some resulting actions. And obviously, there's a long process that goes to determining whether you should designate.

But I think an important reminder here is designations are just one tool we use to fight terrorism. There are a range of steps, including under Secretary Clinton, that Secretary Kerry has continued, stepping up counterterrorism cooperation with not just the Nigerian Government but other governments in Northern Africa, stepping up other resources that we can provide and work with teams on the ground to do. So this is just one tool, but there were many steps that were taken given the rising concern about Boko Haram, and we've only seen a lot of the horrific actions that they've taken unfortunately increase over the course of the last several months.

**QUESTION:** But do you feel you lost a couple of years? I mean, the big attack where they first really came to international notice was – well, though, they'd been around a while before that – was in 2011 when they bombed a UN building in Abuja.

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** Did you lose a couple of years by not focusing attention on Boko Haram (inaudible)? Have – did – they were a very nebulous, shadowy kind of organization. These two years – did it allow them to regroup, and has that in some way hampered the fight that you're now going to have on your hands?

**MS. PSAKI:** No, because designating an organization as a Foreign Terrorist Organization is just one tool. Obviously, the rise of Boko Haram, their increasing acts of terrorism around Africa, is something that we've been watching closely. It's something that Secretary Clinton and her team



were watching closely. Obviously, with the tragic events, with the kidnapping of the Nigerian girls, the world is now watching this, including many across the United States, more closely. And it does – which is why the Secretary raised this this morning – raise a spotlight on this issue and one that we are, despite the tragedy, happy to have on it, given how horrific these events have been and how concerned we are about their proliferation over the last several months and years.

**QUESTION:** Jen, on this. The – one of the debates at the time – at least had by many experts, not necessarily within the building – was that by designating the entire organization, not just the individuals, that it would in some ways be used or manipulated by the Nigerian military, which is notoriously brutal, and that it would be used perhaps for them to go in and just carry out massive human rights abuses beyond what they've already been accused of. Does this building no longer have that sense or assessment or concern about the Nigerian military given that we're now talking about them perhaps needing to carry out a hostage rescue operation? Do we no longer have these concerns about their abuses?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, again, I think – if I remember correctly, I think when we designated Boko Haram in November we talked about this a little bit in terms of our concerns and how assistance would be provided as a result of that. That hasn't changed, but also the Nigerian Government naturally has the lead in this process. The Secretary, as you know, and other members of the Administration have been working closely with them. He's spoken with President Goodluck Jonathan – I've – I don't have anything new today to tell you on that, but – in several times in recent days. And that will continue. And our view is that obviously, this event is so tragic and horrific. We need to do everything we can, as you've heard President Obama say, to provide all the resources we can to bring the girls home.

**QUESTION:** Do you know --

**QUESTION:** So has the level of confidence on part of this building in the abilities of the Nigerian military and government gone up since then?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not going to do a grading of that, but obviously these are --

**QUESTION:** The concerns persist, though, is what you were saying with the --

**MS. PSAKI:** Nothing has changed about that, and our limitations on aid and how we provide it hasn't changed. But at the same time, President Goodluck Jonathan has been open to and embraced our offer of assistance in recent days. Our team, as the Secretary said, has begun to arrive on the ground. I know someone asked yesterday about the size. There are – and I think DOD has provided some numbers in a variety of ways. I think one thing to remember is that there are already dozens if not more than that people on the ground who can be put in place to assist. Obviously, we're sending more, so it's safe to say that the numbers of people who will be assisting from the United States are in the dozens. The exact numbers we'll determine over the course of the coming days.

Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** Do you know when President Goodluck Jonathan first requested U.S. aid for – to rescue some of these girls? My understanding is that there was some lapse on that, that that hadn't happened immediately.

**MS. PSAKI:** That's accurate. As you heard the Secretary say yesterday, in order to provide assistance and the resources that the United States Government has, you need to have a willing partner. And obviously, time is of the essence, and it's been now 24, 25 days since these girls were abducted. But we're going to move as quickly as possible at this point.

**QUESTION:** So if he said that yesterday, does that mean that Nigeria formally asked for the assistance as recently as in the last 24 hours?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we offered and it was accepted.

**QUESTION:** Do you know exactly when?

**MS. PSAKI:** When we – when the Secretary spoke with the Nigerian president two days ago, I believe.

**QUESTION:** Okay. All right, thanks.

**QUESTION:** Do you know whether this building has talked with counterparts in Cameroon or in Chad, perhaps, given the proximity to their borders, on expanding this cooperation and trying to recover the girls?

**MS. PSAKI:** We have. As we've noted in the past, we have been concerned about where – movement of the girls. Our embassies in Cameroon and Chad have been engaging with host governments ever since the abduction occurred several weeks ago. And also important to note for you, Lara and others, that we've been closely engaged with the Nigerian Government through our embassy on the ground as well for the last several weeks. It's just a determination of what additional new assistance beyond what we've been providing for some time now.

**QUESTION:** Have there been any discussion about forming similar teams in those countries with consultation from Abuja on expanding the search, as it were, or has it gotten to that point yet?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, Roz, obviously, with our teams on the ground and our additional resources that will be going, that will be the coordinating entity. So beyond that, if there are needs to expand into other areas, into one – I'm sure it will be coordinated through there.

**QUESTION:** And I'm sure this has been asked and answered previously --

**MS. PSAKI:** No, go ahead.

**QUESTION:** -- but is the U.S. assistance that's coming now or the team that's getting on the ground now, is that specific to the schoolgirls' rescue? I mean, as you know, there's so much violence that's continuing beyond that --

**MS. PSAKI:** It is, but --

**QUESTION:** -- kind of finite event.

**MS. PSAKI:** -- but it's also important to note that long before this, and before we designated Boko Haram, we have been increasing our level of assistance -- coordination on counterterrorism efforts, intel sharing -- before this specific team went to the ground.

**QUESTION:** But did that --

**QUESTION:** Why was (inaudible)?

**QUESTION:** Was that people on the ground? Sorry. Was that actually American units or personnel on the ground at that point?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, as you remember -- I mean, we have an expansive team in Nigeria that works at our embassy from a range of agencies that's been coordinating. I outlined this a little bit the other day, but prior to the announcement just two days ago we had already been providing a range of assistance, including -- to Nigeria, including information sharing, efforts to improve Nigeria's forensics and investigative capacity.

Our assistance also stresses the importance of protecting civilians and ensuring human rights are protected. We work with them to strengthen their criminal justice system, increase confidence in the government by supporting its efforts to hold those responsible for violence accountable. We've been working with the military to improve -- the Nigerian military -- to improve its professional military education, bolster counter-IED capacity, carry out responsible CT operations.

Last year, we also provided an additional approximately \$3 million in law enforcement assistance to Nigeria. So point being, we have been providing assistance. This is specific to the events that happened just a few weeks ago.

Go ahead, Jo.

**QUESTION:** Can I just -- last question. When you said designating is only one tool, I'd like to get your reaction from where Congressman Patrick Meehan in 2011 urged the Secretary to designate Boko Haram as a terrorist organization. And he said that had we done it two years ago, we'd have been able to use to U.S. resources to disrupt and track activities, and that he says we lost two years of increased scrutiny.

**MS. PSAKI:** I think I already answered this specific question about two years ago and why we designated and what we did.

Go ahead, Elise.

**QUESTION:** Can I just – sorry. Back in 2012 there was this Nigerian-U.S. strategic dialogue that happened here, and there was a meeting over the USIP at which I specifically asked a question to the Nigerian representatives who were there – I think it was the foreign minister, but my memory's failing me – about what their position was on designating Boko Haram. And his reply was that they weren't ready yet, and what actually was needed was better development in the north and to address those kinds of issues.

Was there in 2012 a reluctance on the part of the Nigerian authorities – because I assume you consult with people before you go ahead and do a designation to take – at least get their ideas on board. Was there a reluctance by the Nigerian authorities to have an FTO designation because they believed it would give maybe more of a status to Boko Haram than they wanted?

**MS. PSAKI:** I just don't have any other additional insight to offer in terms of two years ago and what factors were – there's a range of factors. There's a long process, as you know. As you also know and I noted, two years ago we did designate certain individual leaders. But I don't have any other insight to provide on that.

**QUESTION:** Because I think that goes to the issue about whether it was blocked at this building or whether it was blocked by the authorities in Nigeria, as to why this group for two years has been allowed to operate with impunity so far.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, again – and I think what you touched on there is the fact that there are a range of tools and a range of coordinated efforts that you work with any country on, or in the case of any concerning organization – whether it's been designated or not – to prevent extremist actions from happening. And that doesn't all require a designating an organization as a Foreign Terrorist Organization. We've been working with Nigeria, we will continue to, but we have been before the official designation in November.

Elise.

**QUESTION:** Jen --

**QUESTION:** Wait. Can I --

**MS. PSAKI:** Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** On the idea that over the last year – I mean, if you've been providing all this assistance and working with the Nigerians on Boko Haram regardless of any type of designation, how come the group has grown in such strength? I mean, are you saying that you haven't provided enough assistance, that the government hasn't been able to utilize or doesn't have the capacity? I mean, you would think that if you've been providing all this increased assistance over the last years, it would have made a difference in a positive direction, and certainly the trends on the ground have been the opposite of that.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, Elise, no one thinks – and you heard the Secretary say this morning that there needs to be more focus from the global community. No one thinks that because the United States designated an organization as a terrorist organization and that we’re providing assistance that we can alone prevent the growth of that extremist group. Obviously, there needs to be a broad effort, an international effort. There needs to be coordination on the ground, and certainly there’s more focus and attention on the risks or the challenges posed and the threats, I should say, from Boko Haram, and perhaps that will gain more interest and more support from the international community.

**QUESTION:** I’m not even talking about the designation now. I’m just talking about even before these girls were kidnapped. I mean, there have been over the last years, this group has been growing in strength. And why did it take the kidnapping of these girls, which is clearly horrific and tragic, but there have been a lot of – increased deadly attacks by Boko Haram over the last year.

**MS. PSAKI:** It didn’t take it. That’s why we’ve been working with the Nigerian Government in increasing our capacity-building, increasing all of the areas I just outlined in response to Lara’s question to help assist them in efforts to combat terrorism, including from Boko Haram, of course.

**QUESTION:** So are you saying that the government still doesn’t have enough capacity, that they haven’t gone after the group with enough fervor? I mean, what – why is the trend --

**MS. PSAKI:** I’m not saying --

**QUESTION:** With all this – I’m just asking, like: With all this increased assistance over the last however many years and all this increased attention that you speak of, why are the trends going in the negative direction?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, Elise, I can’t analyze that for you other than to say it’s a terrorist organization that we recently designated, we have growing – have had growing concern about. And that’s why we’re putting – continue to increase – continuing to increase our resources on it.

**QUESTION:** Jen --

**MS. PSAKI:** Go ahead, Ali.

**QUESTION:** I know that you mentioned just a second ago that a lot of the folks in this interagency team are already on the ground, but I just wanted to get clarification on what Secretary Kerry said this morning about the team “hitting the ground” now, was his exact words. So was that a reference to other folks that are a part of this team who are --

**MS. PSAKI:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** -- coming from the U.S. to Nigeria? Any numbers you can give us or agencies --

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any specific numbers. Obviously, it's being worked through on a day-to-day basis, and they'll be in the dozens.

**QUESTION:** Can you give us any granularity on what agencies they're from or any State Department personnel among them – the USAID folks, or is it all AFRICOM?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any other specific detail. We will see if there's more we can share with all of you.

**May 7, 2014**

**Jen Psaki, Spokesperson**

**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Nigeria**

**Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** Can you repeat once more what the support looks like that you're going to provide to the Nigerian Government?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure. I have a little bit of an update too, so maybe I'll do this all in one. As we announced yesterday and the Secretary announced, we have offered assistance to the Nigerian Government. President Jonathan accepted our offer of assistance, and we're moving swiftly to put in place a team at our Embassy in Abuja that can provide military, law enforcement, and information-sharing assistance in support of Nigeria's efforts to find and free the girls.

Our Embassy in Abuja is standing up an interdisciplinary team – this is what we specifically offered – to coordinate with the Nigerian Government. This morning, our ambassador met with the Nigerian national security advisor. AFRICOM will send a team shortly to assess Nigerian needs. Our legal attache has been in touch with Nigerian police. The FBI stands ready to send additional personnel to provide technical and investigatory assistance, including expertise on hostage negotiations, and USAID is working with partners on what we can do to be ready to provide victims assistance.

So that all falls into the various categories I mentioned yesterday as a part of a, interdisciplinary team that would have representatives from different government agencies.

**QUESTION:** A follow-up question on that one: When you look at the terror group Boko Haram and you look at other terror groups you might be concerned about anywhere in Africa whatsoever, where do you rank this terror group in terms of your concerns?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not going to do a ranking, but I will tell you that obviously, the fact that we designated Boko Haram as a foreign terrorist organization last year and we've increased our efforts cooperating on counterterrorism in many parts of Northern Africa, not just Nigeria, tells you what you need to know about our level of concern and our focus on Boko Haram.

**QUESTION:** One more on the assistance?

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** Is there enough intelligence either from the U.S. or from Nigeria suggesting that all of these students are being held together? I ask only because there's so much emphasis on dealing with hostage negotiations and trying to provide victim assistance. It sounds as if there's already a sense of where these girls actually are.

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm just not going to get into that level of detail, Ros. Obviously, we have a range of capabilities. We've made an offer, of course, to cooperate, and we expect that will be – (cell phone rings) – oh, that's quite a festive ring – (laughter) – that we expect that things will be

proceeding in days, not weeks. But I don't want to get into, from the podium, an assessment of where we think things stand on that front.

**QUESTION:** And do you have anything more on reports in that same province of Nigeria that there may have been another major attack launched by Boko Haram today?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have anything on that report. Let me check, Ros, with our team and see if there's more we have on that.

On Nigeria? Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** Would you categorize this assistance as a U.S. military operation?

**MS. PSAKI:** I would categorize it as an interdisciplinary team to coordinate with Nigerian authorities. There are military – military is a part of that, and as I mentioned, in addition to, of course, AFRICOM sending a team, we have a broad range of resources within the United States Government we'll offer.

**QUESTION:** Now, when you're sending this team, I mean, is it your expectation that they're going to be able to get there and start working right away, or do you think that once they get on the ground, there will be like – then there will be negotiations about the scope and breadth of their work?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we expect additional personnel to be on the ground arriving in the next few days. Obviously, this is in the interests of the Nigerian Government to accept every aspect of our assistance. They conveyed that they were willing to do that yesterday, and it continues to be in their interest to be as cooperative as possible. So --

**QUESTION:** I understand it's in their – obviously in their interest, but is it your expectation that once they go, then negotiations will begin on what they're actually able to do? Or is it your understanding from your discussions with the Nigerians that once they go, the agreement is that they'll be able to do the work that you propose?

**MS. PSAKI:** Yes. Our understanding is the agreement is they'll be able to do the work that we've proposed. Naturally, as a part of that, there's an assessment period of what the needs are and how we can best assist, and the Nigerian Government continues to have the lead. It's not, of course, a unilateral process we're conveying here.

**QUESTION:** Right. There just has been a kind of frustration expressed by some in this government that while the Nigerians have in – it's more that they've, in theory, accepted your help --

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** -- but that it's going to be, like, more of a kind of tough negotiation in terms of what you're actually going to be able to do on the ground.



**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I believe the Secretary, from his phone call, feels it wasn't that they just accepted in theory. They did accept our assistance, and there will need to be a discussion about how to best coordinate moving forward, but that will be happening in the coming days.

Catherine, go ahead, and then we'll go to you next, Arshad.

**QUESTION:** Can I just ask you a couple of specifics? DOD says the team is going to be about 10 people. How many people do you expect overall? How many people are already there? Any sorts of numbers that you can give us, and a timetable on when additional people will be coming in?

**MS. PSAKI:** In a matter of days, additional people will be coming in. Obviously, there are some agencies who are able to assess the specific numbers, but some of this we're still evaluating, and part of that is what's being discussed through interagency meetings in preparation.

**QUESTION:** And has Secretary Kerry spoken with President Jonathan today?

**MS. PSAKI:** He has not spoken with him today, no.

**QUESTION:** Any more planned calls?

**MS. PSAKI:** Not that I'm aware of, but we can keep you all updated on that.

**QUESTION:** And then the British are also sending in a small team. Can you talk a little bit about – they said in their statement that they would be working with a U.S. team. Can you talk a little bit about that cooperation?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any other specifics. Obviously, we work very closely with the British in a range of these efforts, and I'm certain that our interdisciplinary team that has a range of assets will be coordinating with those that they send, but some of that is still being worked out given this was just announced yesterday.

**QUESTION:** Another question on the troops: The Pentagon went to great lengths to stress that these 10 uniformed personnel would not be the first wave of a larger U.S. military presence, certainly there would be no special forces involved in this operation. Was there ever any discussion, any offer from the U.S. to Nigeria about making many more troops available to help the Nigerian army? And if there was any resistance from the Nigerians, was that expected?

**MS. PSAKI:** Roz, I would – not that I'm aware of, but I would point you to DOD on any questions about that.

Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** Jen, I understand you may not be able to give a precise number, but will the additional U.S. personnel going into Nigeria, including law enforcement, military, presumably FBI or others – is it going to be dozens, do you think, or --

**MS. PSAKI:** Let me – it's a fair question. I just don't want to put a number on it before we have a full assessment, so let me see where we are and if there's a number we can get that around, or a broad number, I should say.

**QUESTION:** Jen --

**MS. PSAKI:** Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** -- when you say that agencies like USAID stand ready to help, does that mean that there have been specific requests by the Nigerian Government for specific help that they can provide? Or are they just waiting for the --

**MS. PSAKI:** It means we are assessing what the specific needs are. And obviously, USAID is ready to help if there are specific USAID needs, and as you know, they're very well versed in getting those out as quickly as possible. But again, we're still assessing at this point where we can help specifically.

**QUESTION:** And – yeah, sorry. I didn't mean just USAID, but it sounds like a lot of this is still rather conditional, the legal attaches and --

**MS. PSAKI:** I wouldn't characterize it that way. What it is, is we are – obviously, the Nigerian Government has the lead in this effort, and we're not putting together a unilateral interagency or interdisciplinary team here. We are there to assist and fill in where they have needs. So we need to assess that and determine where they have needs and integrate ours as quickly as possible.

**QUESTION:** So you're – you'll do the assessment, or they'll do the assessment and tell you what they need?

**MS. PSAKI:** We'll work with them.

**QUESTION:** A joint assessment.

**MS. PSAKI:** We'll jointly work with them to do that.

Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** What took so long in designating Boko Haram a terrorist organization?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well obviously, Lucas, as you know, we did that last fall, if I'm remembering correctly --

**QUESTION:** Mm-hmm.

**MS. PSAKI:** -- in November. And there are a range of criteria that go into a decision like that. I don't have anything to lay out for you in terms of internal decision making, but perhaps we can connect you with our CT team, and if they have more to convey, they'll be -- they're the experts.

**QUESTION:** They have been killing and kidnapping people for a long time, for years.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, obviously, designating them sends a strong message about how concerned we are about them.

Do we -- Nigeria? Should we finish Nigeria? Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** One last question following up.

**MS. PSAKI:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** So the decision to send some help and provide some help to the Nigerian Government, has this been taken due to the atrocity of this crime now, or because, as you said, they've been going on for a while, for years murdering people and that you've been watching them for a long time?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I think it's important to note that we have been providing a range of assistance before the announcement yesterday. So that was specifically an interdisciplinary team related to this horrific kidnapping of the young girls in Nigeria. But to date, our counterterrorism assistance to Nigeria because of threats like Boko Haram has focused on information sharing and improving Nigeria's forensics and investigative capacity. We've been working with them to strengthen their criminal justice system, increase confidence in the government by supporting its efforts to hold those responsible for violence accountable. We've provided approximately \$3 million just last year in law enforcement assistance to Nigeria to help boost up their capacity.

So we have been concerned and have provided a range of assistance, and been working closely on counterterrorism efforts long before yesterday. That was just a specific announcement as it related to these recent tragic events.

Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** Change topic?

**MS. PSAKI:** Do we have any more on Nigeria?

**QUESTION:** Yeah, one question more.

**MS. PSAKI:** One more. Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** Does the U.S. know why this happened? Is there any intelligence on this? This is a problem internally inside Nigeria, or this is a message to the world, or what's the reason of this?

**MS. PSAKI:** I can't do an analysis for you on that. Obviously, Boko Haram, as many of you have noted, has been guilty of a range of horrific – what am I trying to say?

**QUESTION:** Acts?

**MS. PSAKI:** Horrific acts – thank you, Arshad, for the assist – horrific acts in the past, and I don't think we're going to analyze the steps of a terrorist.

**QUESTION:** But the fact that you've said yourselves that you think that they have taken them to neighboring countries, does that suggest that there is kind of a growth of the group beyond Nigeria?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm happy to talk to our C team – CT team and see if that is their analysis. Obviously, we've talked about Boko Haram and its proliferation in past months.

**May 6, 2014**

**Jen Psaki, Spokesperson**

**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Nigeria**

**Washington, DC**

**MS. PSAKI:** One other item for all of you: This morning, Secretary Kerry called Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan to reiterate our offer of assistance. President Jonathan welcomed Secretary Kerry's offer to send a team to Nigeria to discuss how the United States can best support Nigeria in its response. In addition, our Embassy in Abuja is prepared to form a coordination cell, an interdisciplinary team – and this is what they discussed on the call – that could provide expertise on intelligence, investigations, and hostage negotiations, help facilitate information-sharing, and providing victim assistance. It would include U.S. military personnel, law enforcement officials with expertise in investigations and hostage negotiations, as well as officials with expertise in other areas that can be – that may be helpful to the Nigerian Government in its response.

The President has directed that we and the Secretary and the State Department do everything we can to help the Nigerian Government find and free these young women. The President and Secretary Kerry have their regular meeting this afternoon, and this will certainly be a prominent topic of discussion.

...

**QUESTION:** I have a few on Nigeria. First, the Pentagon was telling us that there has been no request for any assistance from Nigeria for any military assistance. What would this military assistance under this coordination cell look like? Who would these personnel be? Are they already at the Embassy in Abuja? First off, some practicalities: who are they?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure. Well, some of that is still being determined, Roz. Obviously, this is a conversation they just had in the last couple of hours. The Secretary, again, will be discussing this with President Obama this afternoon. And certainly, there have been ongoing interagency discussions. So it could be a combination of personnel on the ground, and if others are needed to be sent it, I'm sure we'll – we will deliver that.

**QUESTION:** And then on the formation of the cell itself, it's been several weeks since these girls were first abducted, and then there are subsequent reports of more abductions. Is the forming of a cell really what's necessary at this point? Isn't the time for immediate action already gone?

**MS. PSAKI:** I would disagree with that. One, we've been engaged with Nigeria, as you know, long before the tragic events of just a couple of weeks ago to coordinate and assist them in the fight against terrorist organizations, including Boko Haram. There's a range of assistance that we have provided to them in that regard, and we've been in close touch. Certainly, we welcomed the openness of President Jonathan to this type of a coordination cell, this team that could help provide some of the assistance that may be useful for them at this difficult time. And we think absolutely this can be useful in the process moving forward.

**QUESTION:** There were reports over the weekend from some of the relatives of the kidnapped girls that the first lady – Patience Jonathan I believe her name is – may have been behind the arrest of some of these relatives who were demonstrating, trying to raise public awareness. Is the U.S. aware of these allegations of high-level interference, for lack of a better expression? And did the Secretary say anything to President Jonathan about the need to be sensitive to these families' concerns and worries at this time?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, certainly, obviously, addressing all aspects of what is the situation on the ground, including – and I think what I mentioned in one of the areas that would be – we'd be assisting in is assisting with victims' assistance. And as you know, there are some girls who have returned home, and obviously, working with them as they are returned is part of our effort as well.

We have not been able to confirm the specifics around the arrests of the protestors. I don't have anything new on that today. But the focus of their discussion was really on how the United States can assist and our openness, again, to sending the team I outlined.

...

**QUESTION:** Given that Boko Haram is listed as a Foreign Terrorist Organization, how does the fact that it is claiming responsibility for these abductions affect how the U.S. can proceed legally in trying to resolve this crisis? In other words, does the U.S. feel that it has a legal grounds for doing more than providing assistance to the Nigerian Government? Can it do anything because this is affecting one of its allies and because it does involve a group that the U.S. considers a threat to its own security interests?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not sure I understand your question.

**QUESTION:** Is there anything that the U.S. can do, given Boko Haram's FTO designation, that could increase the – its ability to look for these girls?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we've already – before this offer that the Secretary made this morning to President Jonathan, we had already taken a number of steps, given that Boko Haram is a designated terrorist organization and one that we have had increasing concerns about, as you know, from our report that we issued last week. And we have up – leading up to now taken a range of steps, including providing counterterrorism assistance to Nigeria that's focused on information sharing, improving Nigeria's forensics and investigative capacity. We're also working with the Nigerian Government to strengthen their criminal justice system, increase the government – the confidence, I should say, in the government by supporting its efforts to hold those responsible for violence accountable.

In just the last year alone, we have provided approximately \$3 million in law enforcement assistance to Nigeria, including assistance to develop Nigerian capacity to search, identify, mitigate, and dispose of IEDs and related materials, a resident legal attache, and FBI agents have

assisted Nigerian authorities investigating bombings, training for Nigerian law enforcement officials on basic forensics, interview, and interrogation techniques.

So my point is that there are a range of steps we've taken long before the tragic events of the young girls who were kidnapped, and those efforts will continue. But this is obviously a new effort to offer a coordination team.

**QUESTION:** Jen, can I just – you said that you appreciate his openness to – on this – on Secretary Kerry's offer, and you spoke about what the U.S. is offering to do and that the Embassy is prepared to set up this coordination cell. But can you just go further? I mean, did the – did he say he would consider it and let you know? Did he say yes, let's get going? Are you – are people getting ready to go? I mean, what is the status of the offer?

**MS. PSAKI:** He welcomed the offer.

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**MS. PSAKI:** This conversation was just a couple of hours ago.

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**MS. PSAKI:** Secretary Kerry will speak with President Obama about this and how we can continue to step up our efforts to assist the Nigerians in this effort. And of course, naturally want to get this doing as quickly as possible.

**QUESTION:** But you said you would – it seems like it's all contingent on the Nigerians saying – to saying yes, let's get going, let's pull --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, President Jonathan welcomed Secretary Kerry's offer, so obviously --

**QUESTION:** Did he accept the offer, is what I'm saying, and are you preparing a team to get ready to go?

**MS. PSAKI:** We're having discussions about the team that – what this would entail, and who's on the ground, who would need to be sent, and what we need to do to ensure all the resources --

**QUESTION:** I understand. I'm just trying to nail down whether this is an offer that has been accepted and now you're getting the logistics together, or is this an initial offer that he said he would consider and get back to the Secretary?

**MS. PSAKI:** I think by conveying he welcomed it, Elise, I'm conveying that he is open to this team that we've offered. I don't have any other details at this moment, just because this is so new, in terms of when and how and all of that. We'll be working those specifics out over the coming hours and days. But obviously, we want it to happen as quickly as possible.

Catherine, go ahead.

**QUESTION:** About how large would the team be, and can you talk a little bit about the interagency cooperation and who would be running point on that? And then also, following on Elise, is there a follow-up call scheduled with President Jonathan to actually confirm-confirm this?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I don't – I'm not trying to be too cute here. I think he welcomed it, so obviously, the offer of this coordination team is something that they're open to, will continue to work through the specifics on. Our Embassy in Abuja is going to be forming the coordination or the interdisciplinary team. Obviously, because I mentioned there are – there could be representatives from – to provide expertise on intelligence investigations and hostage negotiations, as well as U.S. military personnel, law enforcement officials, this would be something that would cross several agencies, absolutely.

**QUESTION:** And the size?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have that level of detail at this point.

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** But – I mean, I'm sorry to press this point, but --

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** -- you're deliberately not saying that the Nigerians have accepted the offer. And it seems as if that, while the U.S. is willing to kind of pull out all the stops and do whatever it takes and whatever the government would want and would ask for, that the Nigerians have not necessarily accepted U.S. help.

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not meaning to imply that. I think when I say he welcomed it, obviously, we'll work through the specifics of how this will work. But --

**QUESTION:** You can welcome in an offer without accepting it. You can say, "That's a very nice gesture, thank you. I'll get back to you," or whatever. But --

**MS. PSAKI:** That – what you're stating is not what I'm trying to imply here, Elise.

**QUESTION:** Then can you just say that he said, "Yes, thank you, and let's work out the details"?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, this happened just a few hours ago. I don't have that level of transcription from the call this morning. But I think the Secretary came away from the call with an understanding that this is something we'd work with the Nigerians to implement.

**QUESTION:** Jen?



**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** Might this be a good question to ask – to pose to the Secretary himself when --

**MS. PSAKI:** Might be.

**QUESTION:** -- a little later?

**MS. PSAKI:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** Okay. Is it – is this the first time that an offer of assistance has been directly communicated to the Nigerian Government? My understanding was that it had been offered by lower level people before. Is that correct?

**MS. PSAKI:** Certainly. This is obviously a team that would provide expertise on a range of issues, so --

**QUESTION:** No, no, no. But I mean the offer of assistance to Nigeria, had this not been made before? Or am I wrong on that?

**MS. PSAKI:** This specific coordination?

**QUESTION:** No, not this specific offer --

**MS. PSAKI:** In general? Coordinate --

**QUESTION:** -- the offer of we will do whatever --

**MS. PSAKI:** I believe we have made offers of assistance before, yes.

**QUESTION:** Related to this incident?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, obviously, this is something that's new and specific to this. But we have had a range of assistance we've provided, we've offered, that have been connected to it, just given who is responsible.

**QUESTION:** All right. Any more on Nigeria?

**MS. PSAKI:** I think Scott and then Catherine may have – go ahead. Or Scott, why don't you go? Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** Have you seen President Jonathan's comments, which I believe may have happened when the Secretary was in Angola, that appeared to react skeptically to President Obama's concerns about the human rights conduct of the Nigerian military in operations that Boko Haram – in areas where Boko Haram operates, saying essentially if President Obama has evidence that the Nigerian military is mistreating people, he should come forward and make that

clear? Does the United States Government maintain its concern about the conduct of some Nigerian forces in the hunt for Boko Haram?

**MS. PSAKI:** We do. That has not changed in terms of our concerns. I am not aware that the Secretary and President Jonathan got into that level of discussion this morning. I'm happy to circle back and see. Obviously, beyond those concerns our primary focus, as all of you know, is on doing everything we can to get these girls home. And – but that doesn't change our ongoing concerns we've expressed in the past.

**QUESTION:** Because past assistance has had that element in it.

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** There's always been a phrase about ensuring that support for the Nigerian military is related to its safe conduct with civilians. I didn't hear that in your announcement this morning.

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not aware, given this is a team that would be comprised of U.S. officials that would be working with the Nigerian Government – I can circle back and see if that's a piece that is included.

Go ahead, Catherine.

**QUESTION:** I just want to make a distinction or specify here. It seemed like a lot of the things that we've been hearing about building up forensic capabilities, for example, are part of the larger U.S.-Nigeria CT cooperation that's been going on for some time.

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** So this offer of assistance today seems like the – one of the first thing that the United States has offered to do that would be specifically connected to the 200-plus girls.

**MS. PSAKI:** That's right.

**QUESTION:** Am I correct –

**MS. PSAKI:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** -- that there was not as specific –

**MS. PSAKI:** Well --

**QUESTION:** Do you see what I'm asking?

**MS. PSAKI:** Yes, I think I do.

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**MS. PSAKI:** From the beginning – and I think there’s a bit of a crossover here, which is what I was trying to convey, because obviously, the range of assistance that we’ve provided in the past on counterterrorism efforts or in terms of steps to increase accountability and their law enforcement capabilities are all applicable here, right?

**QUESTION:** Right.

**MS. PSAKI:** Because those are all of the tools that have been used in Nigeria to try to get the girls home. But this specific interdisciplinary team or coordination cell that has a range of officials and resources from the interagency is specifically related to this incident.

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

**QUESTION:** Okay. Can I just – sorry.

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** Just a quick question on the forensics that you mentioned.

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** Are you able to give us any detail, even generally, on how forensics could help in the search for these girls?

**MS. PSAKI:** No, and the reason I’m not is because there are a range of capabilities and assistance that obviously we would discuss – we have been, we will discuss with Nigeria and any government that if we outline publicly, that defeats the purpose of the benefit. I will check with our team and see if there’s anything that we can share, but that is my understanding as of now.

**QUESTION:** And this is something that you’ve used in previous situations, is it, though – forensic science?

**MS. PSAKI:** As far as I understand it. I don’t have a history on that, but I understand the interest, and we can see if there’s more we can share on that.

**QUESTION:** Okay. Thank you.

**QUESTION:** I just want to get more on what is the Secretary – what is he going to talk to the President about on this issue? Are they going to meet with – is that something that the President has asked --

**MS. PSAKI:** They have a regular – no, they have a regular meeting weekly whenever the Secretary is in town. And so given the events in Nigeria and given their shared interest in resolving this situation, I just am conveying I expect this will be a major topic of discussion.

**QUESTION:** So what other topics will the President and the Secretary be talking about in their meeting since you're so eager to get their agenda out there today?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not going to outline it further, ...

**May 5, 2014**

**Marie Harf**, Deputy Spokesperson  
**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Nigeria**  
**Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** Secretary Kerry said that the United States was doing everything possible to help the Nigerian Government, and that also the United States is pushing the Nigerian Government. Can you detail exactly what the U.S. has done and what conversations Kerry has had?

**MS. HARF:** Uh-huh. Well obviously, I'm not going to go into specifics of what our assistance looks like. We – broadly speaking, our counterterrorism assistance to Nigeria focuses on intelligence and information-sharing – it's a huge part of it – and also improving their own forensics and investigative capacities. Obviously, these are all things that will be helpful as they try to find these girls, who, as we have many indications, many of them have likely been moved out of the country to neighboring countries at this point.

So we will continue working them. I'm not going to outline specifics for you about what our talks look like. I would note one quick update on travel. Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights Sarah Sewall is on her way to the continent now, I believe, and will travel to Nigeria in the coming days to meet with senior government officials and other key stakeholders to discuss various issues, including this despicable incident. Obviously, our ambassador on the ground has been in touch as well.

**QUESTION:** Has there been any conversation about the reports today that the Nigerian First Lady had protest leaders arrested?

**MS. HARF:** We've seen the reports. I think we're still trying to get a little more information. Obviously, would strongly urge the Nigerian Government to expend all efforts to find the girls, to hold the perpetrators accountable also while respecting the rights of people to freely speak and assemble. If I have more details on them, I'm happy to share --

**QUESTION:** So Goodluck Jonathan's assertion that he's spoken to President Obama a few times about this is --

**MS. HARF:** I would refer you to the White House for that. I'm not aware of that.

...

**QUESTION:** The Country Reports on Terrorism released last week mentioned that kidnapping is becoming a much more prevalent tool of terrorist groups to raise funds or for other purposes. Can you speak broadly to the efforts of the State Department to combat kidnappings such as the one that occurred in Nigeria?

**MS. HARF:** Well, it's a little different depending on where we're talking about, but one of the things we've been doing is working with governments to build their own capacity to fight these groups, right. So where groups like Boko Haram use kidnapping for a variety of reasons, whether

it's to perpetrate violence, to get some ransom money, we've been working so – the ideal situation is where their – the countries can fight this battle on their own.

Obviously, when we talk about terrorist financing writ large, we've been working very hard with partner countries in the financial sector and others to make sure terrorists can't move funds around once they get a hold of them. That's something we've been very focused on as well.

...

**QUESTION:** Specifically, you mentioned that U.S. counterterrorism assistance has focused on intelligence and info-sharing. Is that broadly, or in this specific case?

**MS. HARF:** That's broadly. I'm not going to specify what we're doing in this case in and of itself, but that's broadly speaking what it's focused on. Obviously, we've worked with them in a variety of other areas – criminal justice and things like that.

**QUESTION:** So when you say the indications are that the girls have likely been moved out of the country, is that based on your own assessment or is that based on what you're being told by the Nigerian authorities?

**MS. HARF:** I believe that's based on our own assessment. And it's been widely reported publically.

**QUESTION:** Under Secretary Sewall's – when is she going to be there?

**MS. HARF:** I'm going to get the exact dates from you. I don't have that in front of me. I believe she'll actually be in Nigeria early next week, but I'm getting a full travel schedule for you.

**QUESTION:** Okay. And then – and just – I guess recognizing that you don't want to talk specifically about what – can you – what does her – what can her – well not her bureau. Whatever it is. What would --

**MS. HARF:** Her fiefdom.

**QUESTION:** Yes. What kind of things can it provide, just generally? What could it give to the Nigerians to help --

**MS. HARF:** Well, she obviously focuses on democratization, civil society, human rights, civil security, other issues as well.

**QUESTION:** Right.

**MS. HARF:** So obviously, that plays a part in their overall fight against Boko Haram. And as a senior State Department official --

**QUESTION:** Right.

**MS. HARF:** -- I think there may be some other folks traveling with her as well --

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**MS. HARF:** -- possibly from other places, so once we have a full delegation list, we'll let you know.

**QUESTION:** From other agencies?

**MS. HARF:** Uh-huh, yeah.

**QUESTION:** Okay. But in terms of what she can -- I mean, is there anything that her fiefdom, as you call it, can bring to this specific incident?

**MS. HARF:** To the -- to actually finding the --

**QUESTION:** To help, yeah.

**MS. HARF:** I'm not aware, but obviously, it's a senior official and under secretary who is discussing the range of ways we can work with them.

...

**QUESTION:** I guess my question is: Why can't you give us specific details on what assistance you either are providing or are offering?

**MS. HARF:** Because we're going to keep working with the Nigerians privately on that. Obviously, they have come out very publicly and said that they're making every effort to find these girls. I just don't think we're going to outline how we're helping them. What we're focused on is making sure they can find them and bring them home to their families.

**QUESTION:** Do you anticipate any military assets being provided?

**MS. HARF:** The United States?

**QUESTION:** Yeah.

**MS. HARF:** I do not.

**QUESTION:** And since you can't get into the specifics --

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible.)

**MS. HARF:** And then I'll go back to you. Yeah, go ahead, Catherine.

**QUESTION:** -- can you characterize the conversations? Are they welcoming assistance? Are they saying we have this under control, things like that?

**MS. HARF:** Well, I think they've been very clear they don't. The situation itself is not under control. I don't have much more of a readout for you. They obviously know this is an issue of grave concern, no more so than to them. So we're standing by to help in ways that we think are appropriate and that we can.

Uh-huh.

**QUESTION:** Wouldn't it be hard --

**MS. HARF:** Wait, hold on.

**QUESTION:** The Boko Haram said that -- today that -- admitted to kidnapping the girls and threatening to sell them.

**MS. HARF:** The video?

**QUESTION:** Yes.

**MS. HARF:** Uh-huh.

**QUESTION:** Your reaction to that video?

**MS. HARF:** Well, it does -- our folks are looking at it. Obviously, there are a lot of experts in the U.S. Government who look at these kind of things. Boko Haram frequently does put out these kind of propaganda videos. There's nothing really new about their capacity to do that. The video does appear legitimate. And beyond that, our folks are looking at it, and if there's anything else I have to say -- I mean, look, to be fair, it underscores the horrific nature of what they've done and why we need to find these girls and bring them home. Beyond that, I don't have much more analysis.

...

**QUESTION:** You said that the indication is that the girls have been moved outside the country.

**MS. HARF:** Some of them, yeah.

**QUESTION:** Are you working with any of the other governments or to broaden this effort to try and locate these girls?

**MS. HARF:** Well, we'd obviously encourage the Government of Nigeria to work with their neighbors to see if there's ways they can work together.



**QUESTION:** (Inaudible) locate these girls without the use of the U.S. military?

**MS. HARF:** I think there are a variety of ways to locate people. One of the things we've been working on with the Nigerian Government is building their own capacity to do some of this, so --

**QUESTION:** What about in terms of law enforcement and FBI?

**MS. HARF:** I mean, I don't want to speak for the U.S. military. I just said to my knowledge, there's not.

**QUESTION:** What about in terms of --

**MS. HARF:** I don't want to predict about what we might do if we can't find them.

**QUESTION:** But, I mean, is this an interagency effort? Is the FBI working on this? Is --

**MS. HARF:** I don't know if the FBI is. I'm happy to check with them. I just don't know.

**QUESTION:** Sorry, so going back to my original question, then, when Secretary Kerry said that the United States is really pushing the Nigerians, there's no other specifics about that, like in what way?

**MS. HARF:** No. Well, he said we would continue to provide counterterrorism assistance, we'd continue working with them. I don't have more specifics beyond what he said.

**QUESTION:** Not even whether other agencies are involved or --

**MS. HARF:** I don't have more specifics beyond what he said.

**May 1, 2014**

**Marie Harf**, Deputy Spokesperson  
**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Nigeria**  
**Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** -- and Boko Haram, and if you have a statement on the abduction of the schoolgirls, and then I have a couple specifics.

**MS. HARF:** Okay, yeah. So just a couple of items on that. Obviously, this is a horrific tragedy, abhorrent – I don't know if there are enough words that I could come up with to say how terrible the situation is.

We know Boko Haram is active in the area. We've worked very closely with the Nigerian Government to build their capacity to fight this threat. We have been engaged with the Nigerian Government in discussions on what we might do to help support their efforts to find and free these young women. We'll continue to have those conversations and help in any way we can.

**QUESTION:** So on the potential U.S. assistance, you're still talking about what you could provide to them? Are you providing any sorts of assets already or reconnaissance in terms of locating their – where they actually are?

**MS. HARF:** Let me check and see if we've actually provided anything. I know we've offered to provide any assistance we can. Let me check with our folks and see if we have.

**QUESTION:** And then – because you said you're talking, it seems like the Nigerians are open to the United States providing assistance?

**MS. HARF:** Let me check and see what the status of that is. I'm just not sure.

**QUESTION:** What kind of assistance?

**MS. HARF:** Again, let me check and see on the details. We've said we're happy to help and assist. We obviously work very closely with them on counterterrorism writ large, particularly in terms of building their own capacity to fight this threat, and we will continue to do so. But let me get some specifics.

**QUESTION:** And then there are reports that there are negotiations that are underway. Do you have any information on that, and if you see that as being a fruitful resolution to the situation?

**MS. HARF:** I don't have any information that. Just in terms of the assistance piece, to go back, I don't have any information on that. I can check. As of last year, for Fiscal Year 2012, we provided over \$20 million in security assistance to Nigeria. Part of what that does is help professionalize their military, investigate terrorist attacks, and enhance their forensics capabilities. And we've worked with law enforcement there as well to help build their capacity as well. So I'll see if there are more details.

**April 14, 2014**

**Jen Psaki**, Spokesperson

**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Nigeria**  
**Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** No, different topic. Nigeria. Do you have anything on the --

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** -- explosion in the capital today?

**MS. PSAKI:** I do. We condemn today's attack on Nyanya Motor Park south of Abuja which killed over 70 people. We are outraged by these senseless acts of violence against innocent civilians. We also condemn the attacks in three villages in Borno State that took the lives of nearly 100 people over the weekend. We encourage the Government of Nigeria to conduct a full investigation to identify and bring justice to the perpetrators of these attacks. We continue to stand with the Nigerian Government and people as they grapple with violent extremism.

**QUESTION:** The Nigerian president has blamed Boko Haram for the incident, the bombing in Abuja. Do you see any evidence supporting that claim?

**MS. PSAKI:** We have seen that, but to our knowledge, no group has claimed responsibility yet. We continue to work closely with the Nigerian Government and its neighbors to address the growing threat of Boko Haram in a comprehensive manner. But again, it's, in our view, preliminary to make that judgment.

**April 7, 2014**

**Jen Psaki**, Spokesperson

**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Nigeria  
Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** In Nigeria, there are members of the military who have come forward with evidence that the Nigerian military itself is coordinating attacks with Boko Haram.

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** Is the United States aware of these reports? Does the United States have any independent analysis of collusion between the Nigerian military and Boko Haram? How does that affect your helping the Nigerian military with what you thought was a fight against Boko Haram?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, let me check, Scott, with our team. I haven't had a chance to talk with them about this issue this morning – or this afternoon.

**October 15, 2013**

**Jen Psaki**, Spokesperson

**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Nigeria**

**Washington, DC**

**MS. PSAKI:** So we are, of course, aware of the Amnesty International report on detainee deaths. We share Amnesty International's grave concerns about the human rights situation in Nigeria, and in this case, about detainee treatment. We note our full support for access of international humanitarian organizations to all Nigerian detention facilities, and it's also worth noting that we engage Nigerian leaders on, of course, a range of issues, but specifically on this all the time. As you know, President Obama met with President Jonathan on the margins of the UN – of UNGA just a few weeks ago. Secretary Kerry has also made this point to the Nigerians as well, and that's a point we'll continue to make.

**QUESTION:** So – but the United States is funding these troops; correct?

**MS. PSAKI:** Funding the troops?

**QUESTION:** Funding these security forces, yes.

**MS. PSAKI:** I am not – I don't have the amount of funding in front of me, but we continue to emphasize, of course, with the Nigerian Government, that abuses by the security forces undermine our security goals. Our larger goal here is a strategy here to deal with Boko Haram and deal with the overarching challenges that the government and the people are facing, but of course, these abuses are unacceptable and they're noted in the Amnesty International report. But I can check on the funding question for you if helpful.